

Beginning Understanding of Dhamma

by Ajahn Buddhādāsa

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma talk given at Suan Mokkh on 2 July 1991

[Note: for further reading on this theme, see the book *Under the Bodhi Tree : Buddha's Original Vision of Dependent Co-arising*, Wisdom, Boston, 2017]

In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular talks during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a verbatim transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

First of all I'd like to express my delight that all of you have come here to this place in search of what we call 'Dhamma.'

Let's take a little time to consider a few miscellaneous matters such as the fact that we're using this world of 5 a.m., and then the fact that you must walk here from the meditation center which is a distance of about two kilometers.

The world of 5 a.m. is a fitting, appropriate time for studying the Dhamma, for studying profound things. This is because the mind is not yet full or crowded with things.

Most of the flowers in the forest bloom or blossom around this time. And the Buddha awakened under the *bodhi* tree at this time. There are certain things about this time of day that are fitting for a blossoming, a waking up to the way things are, to seeing things as they really are.

The mind is free or void. At this time the mind hasn't yet been cluttered with all kinds of things, and so it's able to receive a great deal of new information and experience, unlike the mind of, say, the late morning or the afternoon which is no

longer void or free but is all cluttered up with extra and too much stuff. So it's important to know how to use this time when the mind is void, free and when it's fit for understanding things deeply.

So please try to make the most of this hour, this time at 5 a.m. This is an ancient tradition in Buddhism. The monks and novices wake up at least this early in order to use this special time of day to study Dhamma. To see things fresh and new in ways they haven't seen before. This is an old tradition in Buddhism to make use of the world of 5 a.m.

If you are able to do this then you will get the highest profit from this hour. It's like we've added a whole extra hour to our life by making use of this very special time of day.

And then the fact that you have to walk over here to hear the talk. There is more to this than just taking a morning stroll. There is something special about this. This is a time to train in *walking without a walker*. We're not merely walking over here just to get here, but we're using this as an opportunity to train in *walking without a walker*.

This is the highest kind of activity in which the body, together with the mind, act, and they act without the thought or feeling that '*I act*,' that '*I am acting*,' '*I am doing this*.' Just merely the body and mind together, functioning naturally to do the necessary activity without any thought or feeling of '*I do it*.'

This lesson then can be extended and spread until it becomes *acting without an actor* or *doing without a doer* which is the highest possible lesson, the greatest lesson there is, is to be able to do without a doer, to act without an actor. The lesson we're using here is just a small one, a starting point – walking without a walker. But if we learn to practice this simple little lesson then we can expand it, increase it until it becomes the highest lesson of acting without an actor.

And this can be taken to the point of *living life without anyone who lives*. You may not be able to understand this right now, but eventually you should be able to know what it means to live without someone who lives.

All of this is the heart of Buddhism, that is to live, to have life, to have all the things in life without any thought or feeling of someone who owns the life, of someone who *is* the life.

Now we would like to get more into talking about the Dhamma. In doing so we'd like to point out the difficulty that arises due to language. There're all kinds of problems involved with talking about Dhamma, and these are problems of language.

First of all, we speak different languages, so this is one level of difficulty that we don't even speak the same language. But even when we speak the same language there is another difficulty: the way we use and understand language even if it might be the same language can be different. This is a tremendous difficulty if we're not aware of the different ways that we use language.

One person is quite old and has lived in this world for a long time; and then another person has been born fairly recently and doesn't have so much experience of the world. These two people will speak differently according to their knowledge and experience of the world. The words of the first person will have much deeper meaning – the much deeper meaning coming out of their long experience of how things work in this world. The other person, the child will speak with words that barely have any meaning at all because they lack experience and understanding of the world. In this way, two people can be speaking two different languages because of the meanings they give to words differ.

One person merely speaks about material things, they just talk about the physical things that they see and hear in the world, they take these physical things according to their appearances and speak in only that way. Another person, however, has had much more experience of the world and speaks instead about the deeper meanings of material things, they've seen beyond the surfaces of things to their deeper meanings and then speak accordingly. So one person speaks what we call 'people language' – the language of ordinary people which deals primarily with physical material things – and another person speaks what we call 'Dhamma Language,' the language of the meaning of things. We have great difficulty because we don't understand and are unaware of these two kinds of language.

The mind of the ordinary person is quite low, most people live on a rather low level, a level of life in which the mind is always under the power of the positive & negative. The mind is constantly influenced and trapped within the positive & the negative, and so these ordinary people speak in a certain way according to their slavery to positive & negative. But then there is another kind of person in this world, the noble ones, those whose minds are freed from the positive & the negative, those

whose minds are beyond, above all meaning of positive & negative, and they speak in a different way. So there are these two kinds of understanding and speaking in this world: the kind of language which is still trapped within positive & negative; and then the language which is free of, beyond all positive & negative. This is the highest level of people language on one hand and Dhamma language on the other.

Now what's strange about this business is that each of us must use both kinds of language. You can't avoid speaking both kinds of language. In ordinary situations when we have some material purpose we speak the ordinary people language, but in other times when we have a higher purpose, when we're seeking the profound purpose of things, then we must speak in Dhamma language. We can't avoid it, sometimes we speak in the ordinary language of people in the street and other times we use the language of Dhamma.

For example, take the word 'God,' in people language we use the word 'God' to mean some person, some person with great powers and who has feelings and even an appearance like a person. But when we speak of 'God' in Dhamma language, we're speaking about something that can't be described – it can't be pictured in anthropomorphic terms. So we use both kinds of languages but the meanings are totally different.

Now, when we talk about Dhamma it's necessary that we speak in Dhamma language, and this is the difficulty for most people. Most people aren't very familiar with Dhamma language so it's difficult for them to understand. Therefore, it's necessary to study both of these kinds of language until we're very experienced with and familiar with both of them: the material language or people language; and the spiritual language or Dhamma language. To understand Dhamma we need to understand both of these kinds of language, otherwise we'll be constantly misunderstanding things.

Now, what we call 'Dhamma' has both a material side and a mental or spiritual side, therefore we need to examine and study Dhamma on both sides, in both aspects. So we speak about Dhamma in the ordinary people language, in the material way of speaking, and then we speak about Dhamma in Dhamma language, in the mental or spiritual way of speaking. In order to understand Dhamma fully we must discuss it in both kinds of language. One thing you should know is a particular amazing thing about the word 'Dhamma.' The word 'Dhamma' applies to everything, everything

whether mental or physical, no matter how refined or how coarse, how superficial or how profound. All things are included when we speak of Dhamma. There is nothing that doesn't fit under the term 'Dhamma.' So one marvelous thing about the word 'Dhamma' is that Dhamma means everything, all things are included in Dhamma.

So there are what we call *rūpa-dhammas* (material things, physical things), especially our bodies in the material world. Then there are what we call *nāma-dhammas* (immaterial or intangible things), especially the mind and the mind's activities. But then there is something which is neither *rūpa-dhamma* nor *nāma-dhamma*, it is neither physical nor mental. So there are three kinds of things: the physical; the mental; and that which is neither physical nor mental. Even so, all kinds of things, all of the things which fit in these three categories, and there is nothing which doesn't fit into one of these categories, all three of them are all Dhamma.

Then we can talk about existence and non-existence, and that which neither exists nor does not exist. I don't know if you can understand this, but there is what people call 'existence' and then what they call 'non-existence,' and that which you can't really say whether it exists or not-exists, there's no relevance in speaking about it in terms of 'existence' or 'non-existence.' These three terms cover everything. Existence (*bhava*), non-existence (*abhava*), and then that which is 'neither *bhava* nor *abhava*.' But all three of these are still Dhamma, Dhamma includes them all.

Another amazing thing about this word 'Dhamma' is that it is the answer to all questions and all problems. There isn't a question or problem anywhere that can't be answered with the word 'Dhamma.' For example the question, 'Where do we come from?' We come from Dhamma. 'Why do we change?' Because of Dhamma. 'Why do we die?' Because of Dhamma. Or questions like 'Where does the Universe come from?' It comes out of Dhamma. And 'Why will the Universe break up and disappear?' Because of Dhamma. There is not one question or problem that can't be answered with the word 'Dhamma.'

In Buddhism we systematize things, and so we take the word 'Dhamma' and distinguish four fundamental meanings. The first, of these meanings is 'nature' – Dhamma means nature. The second, meaning of Dhamma is 'law' – the law that is inherent in all nature, in natures. The third meaning is 'duty' – the duty that needs to be done according to the law of nature. And then the fourth meaning is 'fruits or

results’ – the results that come from doing that duty according to the law of nature. These are the four fundamental meanings of the word ‘Dhamma’: nature; the law of nature; the duty that must be done according to that law of nature; and the fruits of doing that duty.

Now, our problems are with the individual, with the person. Our problems aren’t up in the stars someplace. So we need to look at the person, at the individual where the problems are. So let’s look at ourselves. First of all look at this body, this living body here. This living body is nature, is part of nature; and then all the time, constantly, this body is changing and functioning according to the law of nature – although we may not be aware of it this body is always being under the control, forced to submit to the law of nature; and then which is the duty of this body; and then there is also the results the fruits of doing that duty so long as this body naturally, even unconsciously, does its duty then certain fruits will arrive. So first of all we need to see all meanings of the word ‘Dhamma’ right here in this living body.

We can examine all four of these meanings right here, right now, right in our own bodies. These physical realities are just nature. And then all the time they are under the control of the law of nature. The creation of these bodies is due to the law of nature. The fact that they will end, break up, and disappear is due to the law of nature. The fact of their constant change is because of the law of nature. The law of nature is the equivalent of ‘God’ or has the meaning of ‘God’ – that which creates, destroys, changes, maintains things. This fact or meaning of the law of nature can be seen right here and now within the very natures of these bodies. Then there is the duty, in each moment there is the duty – that which needs to be done according to the law of nature. When the law of nature is as it is, then there is always some duty or responsibility which is required. And by doing that duty there arise certain fruits, that this body can maintain itself, can stay alive, are due to the fruits of doing that duty according to the law of nature. So look and see all four meanings, all four of these meanings inside the body, and then you will understand the word ‘Dhamma.’

Another amazing thing about the word ‘Dhamma’ is that it can’t be translated into any other language. The word ‘Dhamma’ is a very ancient Indian word, when there were first certain people who understood Dhamma then they used this word in their ancient Indian language. And since then no one has been able to translate this word properly. We heard that when knowledge of Buddhism first came to England,

the various linguists and scholars who were translating things into English thought of thirty-eight different translations for the word 'Dhamma.' They had thirty-eight different words and still they weren't finished, they hadn't covered all the meanings of 'Dhamma' and so they gave up. They recognized that it's impossible to translate the word 'Dhamma.' We just have to use the original word. This is what is done in Thai, Chinese and many other languages. We just use the original term 'Dhamma' or *thamma* [Thai] rather than translating it.

Now the question arises, of the different meanings of the word 'Dhamma,' which one are we going to use when we talk with people? When we are talking, which meaning of Dhamma are we using? Especially when we talk with ordinary people who haven't studied this very much, or when we speak with children, which meaning are we going to use? In this case the best thing to do is to use the third meaning. The first meaning is nature, the second meaning is the law of nature, the third meaning is the duty, the duty according to the law of nature. This is the meaning we should use when speaking with ordinary people and with children. This was the case in ancient India. In the dictionaries for children the standard meaning given to Dhamma was 'duty.' When speaking about 'you should know Dhamma,' this refers to duty. When we must say 'one must practice Dhamma,' this means practicing duty. So when we speak in an ordinary way with ordinary people it's best, it's safest to use Dhamma in the sense of the third meaning, in terms of duty.

So the most important or basic meaning of the word 'Dhamma' is the duty that will save us, the duty that is necessary for survival. If we study the roots of this ancient Indian word, we'll find that the root of 'Dhamma' is 'to uphold,' the root of it means to uphold, to protect, maintain, or to cherish. 'To uphold, or 'to cherish' is the meaning of Dhamma. This is exactly what duty means, the duty that must be upheld. If we don't uphold it then we will die. The duty that must be cherished in order that we can survive, so that we can be safe. That which must be upheld and cherished, this is the meaning of Dhamma, this is the meaning of the word 'duty,' the duty that's necessary for our survival and salvation.

Those people who are obsessed with and infatuated with democracy, will think that duty or Dhamma takes away our rights and privileges. Those of us who are deluded by democracy or human rights, tend to think that doing our duty takes away our freedom, takes away our rights and privileges, but this is a very superficial and

rather immature understanding. Dhamma is the duty necessary to live. To survive, to be saved we must do our Dhamma, we must do our duty. And so we give up the little privileges, the little rights, the petty little individual rights in order to do, so that we have the right on a higher level to do what really needs to be done, that is in order to survive. We give up the petty little rights and privileges, in order to have the right to be human, to live as a human being, to be truly human.

So doing Dhamma, doing duty, practicing Dhamma, doesn't take away our rights or our freedom. Please be careful to not misunderstand the word 'duty' or 'Dhamma' in such a careless way. If we speak simply for the sake of living in this world, for the sake of and in terms of ethics, then we can say that duty or Dhamma means the rightness, the correctness needed to survive. We survive through duty – due to duty we survive. The correctness necessary for that survival, this is the meaning of duty or Dhamma.

Next we should consider our duty regarding Dhamma. What is our duty or our Dhamma towards the Dhamma? The first duty is to study the Dhamma. To learn about Dhamma, to investigate Dhamma. So learning and studying the Dhamma is the first duty. We must learn and study about nature, the law of nature, duty according to the law of nature, and the fruits of doing that duty.

The second duty is to practice Dhamma. To the degree that we have studied it and understand it, to the degree that we understand the Dhamma, then we must practice it. This is the second duty, to put the Dhamma into practice, to live it. When we practice Dhamma then the fruits of doing that duty will appear.

So our third duty regarding Dhamma is to use those fruits wisely, correctly, to use the fruits of Dhamma practice both for one's own benefit and for the benefit of others. None of us can live in this world alone. All of us must live with the help and support of others. So to correctly use the benefits and fruits of Dhamma we must use them to help others as well as ourself. So this is our duty regarding Dhamma: to learn it; to practice it; and then to use the results wisely and correctly.

So over at the meditation center you must study dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) which is the basic fact of all things. So you study dependent origination, and then you practice *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness with breathing in and breathing

out); and then you learn how to use the benefits and results that come from practicing ānāpānasati. This is what we're doing over at the meditation center.

First, studying about dependent origination, the basic fact or law of all things. That is the basic law that runs everything in our lives; and then applying that knowledge of dependent origination; and then practicing in line with that knowledge by practicing mindfulness with breathing so that we are able to respond to the law of nature; and then using any results and benefits that arise for our own sake and the sake of others.

Those of you who are Christians need not worry about what to do with God. You don't have to abandon God, or abandon prayer to God. The law of nature that we've been talking about, that is 'God.' The highest meaning of God is nothing but the law of nature which runs and controls every aspect of life. And then duty, doing the duty according to the law of nature, this is the highest meaning of prayer. To pray to God is merely to do that duty according to God's will. The law of nature is God, and doing what needs to be done is to do God's will. So there need not be any confusion, worry, or problem about whether to be a Buddhist or a Christian, or a Muslim, or a Hindu – those are just superficial distinctions. Because all of us have the same God, all of us have the same law of nature, that's what matters. So we need not worry about things like whether to be Buddhist, or Christian, or whatever. Just understand the law of nature, just recognize God's will, and pray to God by doing the duty according to the law of nature. Whether you call it 'Dhamma' or 'God' isn't so important.

Forgive us for insisting, but every religion in fact every culture has a god. There isn't any exception, every religion and every culture has a god. But western scholars have taken it upon themselves to decide which religions have a god and which don't. They've gone and said, 'well, this one has a god and that one doesn't.' Unfortunately these arrogant scholars don't know what they're talking about. They don't even understand the meaning of the word 'god,' their eyes are closed so tight. The meaning of the word 'God' is the highest thing that needs to be obeyed. That highest thing which must be obeyed. You'll see that in every religion, there is something which is God, there is always something which is considered to be the highest thing that must be obeyed. Even in the rather, the so-called primitive religions, the forest people, they always have something which must be obeyed, some highest thing. So

they all have a god, every religion, every culture. Even modern atheist culture, so called atheist culture if you look, has something which must be obeyed.

And so it's totally false to say that certain religions don't have a god, all religions have a god, and we'll see this once we understand the meaning of the word 'god.' Even animals have their god, every animal including the dog here has a god, some highest thing or power which must be obeyed. Even these animals here have some highest thing that must be obeyed. If they don't obey it they will die. It's very simple. We all have some god that it must be obeyed, otherwise we will die. All living things are like this. For the dog, its god might be its owner, if it doesn't obey its owner it could really be in trouble. For all of us it's the same for all living things, there is some god that must be obeyed.

So let's have two meanings to the word 'god': one is the personal meaning of god, god conceived in personal or anthropomorphic terms; and then God in the impersonal sense where we don't attribute any human or personal characteristics to God. Then all things will have a god, that highest power that must be obeyed otherwise we will die. When we see and have this god then we can truly survive.

When we speak with children, if we talk about the impersonal god they won't be able to understand. So for children we need to talk about a personal god, a god that has some human characteristics that children can understand and identify with. But when we talk to people who have sufficient intelligence, enough awareness and wisdom, then we can put aside the childish god and speak about the impersonal god, a god that doesn't have any human or personal characteristics. So we need both kinds of god for the different kind of people in the world. Those who are spiritually immature have the personal god, and for those who are spiritually mature there is the impersonal god. Both are necessary.

Those of you who are Christians won't have much trouble understanding this. If you think about the passage in the Book of John, at the very beginning where it says: "In the beginning the Word was," when it speaks of the Word or the Logos. This means nothing else but the Law. What other meaning could 'the Word' have? Than the Law? The Law is God, the Law was with God. Or you can just say God, 'in the beginning the Word was, the Law was, God was.' And there are no exceptions to this. Christians should be able to understand quite easily what we are talking about so that all of us can recognize God or Dhamma.

Before there was any universe, before there were any human beings, before there was any religion, “the Word was.” ‘The Word was.’ If you understand these words then you won’t have any problem. So in the beginning the Word was. If we just say the ‘Word’ it doesn’t have so much meaning, but if we say ‘Law,’ it has more strength, more power. The Word, the Logos, the Law, is nothing other than Dhamma. This is what we’ve come to the meditation center to study and practice, to study and practice the Dhamma.

So we can stop all our fighting and competing amongst religions, all the religions in the world can just stop fighting, stop arguing and competing, because all religions without exception have God, all religions have the law of nature – have Dhamma. So why argue and compete, just a waste of time and energy? Instead, all we need to do is study Dhamma, study Dhamma and practice Dhamma according to Dhamma, and then reap the benefits and fruits of practicing the Dhamma. This is all we need to do, is to understand and practice and reap and see the benefits of Dhamma. All the arguing is just a waste of time and in fact goes against the will of God. So this is about the word ‘Dhamma’ which is so hard for people to understand.

We should talk about the final goal, the final goal of life or of humanity. Christians like to speak of ‘entering the Kingdom of God,’ ‘going to live with God,’ ‘dwelling in the Kingdom of God,’ eternally. Hindus speak of ‘being united with’ and living eternally, to exist eternally as *paramātmān*. But Buddhists are a little different.

The goal of Buddhism is to realize eternal voidness. Those of you who have come to learn about Buddhism, upon hearing that the final goal of Buddhism is eternal voidness, you may start to wonder, have doubts, begin to shake your head, even be a little confused. Voidness is the heart, the essence of Buddhism. Buddhism is nothing but voidness. So it’s important to understand voidness correctly. Very simply voidness just means to be free of all problems. Voidness is the state of not having any problems whatsoever. When there aren’t any problems at all, that is voidness. This the heart and essence of Buddhism. Please understand voidness correctly. If you don’t, you’ll misunderstand all of Buddhism, and you won’t appreciate what it has to offer for you.

Earlier when we spoke of walking over from the center, of *walking without a walker*, then we were talking about voidness. If we practice walking without a walker

throughout our lives, if we practice *doing without a doer*, then we are practicing voidness. When there is doing without any doer, when there is acting without any clinging to or attachment to the 'me' or 'I' who does something, that is the meaning of voidness. When there is no attachment to action, to life, to anything as being 'me' as being 'self,' then the mind is void. That is the void mind. That mind has realized voidness, and the mind itself then is void, void of any thinking about 'me' about 'self.' Walking without a walker, doing without a doer, these are simply lessons in voidness so that we can realize eternal voidness. This is the heart and the goal of Buddhism. Now, whether or not you like this word 'voidness' depends on your personal feelings and inclinations, that's up to you. But Buddhism is about nothing but voidness.

Now, don't go thinking that voidness is pessimistic, some people jump to this conclusion, but there's nothing pessimistic about voidness. Voidness is beyond both pessimism & optimism. Voidness transcends all positive & negative. If voidness is still caught within pessimism & optimism, positive & negative, then it's not really voidness. If there's positive & negative it can't be void, there's no voidness. Voidness is beyond all such distinctions and discriminations such as pessimism & optimism.

So how are we going to reconcile this eternal Kingdom of God with the eternal existence of the Hindus, with the eternal voidness of Buddhism? How can these three things be reconciled? To exist eternally something must not change. Eternal existence is to not change, and 'to not change' means to be unaffected by any cause or condition. As long as there are causes and conditions, then there will be change, and there will not be eternal existence. Voidness is beyond all causes and conditions. Voidness has no causes and conditions. So voidness does not change. So you can speak of voidness as existing eternally.

God can't be anything. God cannot exist as this or that. To picture God in a certain way as looking like this or having a certain form or appearance is impossible. To describe God, to give attributes to God is impossible. Of course, people try to do this, but this is just to draw pictures for children. To draw a picture of God looking like a human being, this is solely for children who lack any real experience or intelligence. But the true God, real God is beyond any such forms, appearances, pictures, and descriptions. And so God is also void. God is void of all such things.

You can't say that God is this or God is that. Therefore God is void of all kinds of being, of all kinds of existence. This is the eternal God, which is no different than eternal voidness.

You've probably heard the words that if you see God you must die. If you remember back to the story of Moses and the burning bush, where God hides behind the burning bush, there are the words that "if you see god you will die." The meaning of this is extremely profound. If one sees God, that means if one sees voidness – if one sees the reality of voidness, that everything is void of both being & not-being, void of existence & non-existence, void of individuality, void of being a person or a being – when you see this... when there is the seeing of this voidness, or seeing God, then one must die. That idea, that image of being an individual, being a person, being a separate self, must die. This is very profound. This will help you to understand how eternal voidness, eternal life, and eternal God are all the same thing.

Now we should look at the final goal of life as it applies to our lives, as it concerns our lives today. If we study, practice, and reap the fruits of Dhamma, then we must describe life as being 'cool.' When we understand and live according to Dhamma, life is then cool. It doesn't bite its owner. When we live in the ordinary way of most people, oblivious to Dhamma, wrapped up in our personal little concerns, our likes & dislikes, spinning it around in positive & negative, then life is hot, there's no real peace, everything is hot and busy, and that is a life which bites its owner. But when life is void, when there is voidness, no clinging to 'me' and 'mine,' no clinging to positive & negative, then there is nothing hot, it's all cool and peaceful, and life doesn't bite its owner. But as soon as there's clinging to something as being positive & negative, as being 'me' and 'mine,' then life bites its owner. Go ahead and cling to life, attach to it as being 'me,' as being 'mine,' and then it bites that owner. As soon as you try and own life, life itself bites. But when there's none of that clinging, none of that foolishness, then life is free, life is void, it's cool, it's peaceful.

This is how the eternal voidness, eternal life, eternal God concerns us right here and now. How to be cool and peaceful right here and now, and how to use that coolness and peace for the benefit of oneself and the benefit of others. We're not just trying to be cool but also to be peaceful and useful.

So there are two kinds of life: there is the life which is hot, which bites its owner; and there is the life which is cool, which doesn't bite its owner. The life that is full of concepts, of 'me,' of 'I,' of 'self,' that life isn't void. But the life in which there are no concepts or thoughts or feeling of 'me,' of 'I,' of 'self,' that life is void.

The life full of 'me' and 'mine' is hot, it bites its owner. The life which is free of 'me' and 'mine' is cool, it doesn't bite its owner. The free life of voidness is to be void of all self, all *attā*. *Attā* is the Pāli word for self. To be void of *attaniya*, anything connected with self, or in short, 'me' and 'mine.' To be void of self and anything related to self, concerned with self, connected to self, void of *attā* and *attaniya*, of 'me' and 'mine.' This is the life that is truly peaceful. It is a life which can never bite its owner because there is no more owner.

So know the difference between these two kinds of life: the life of self and the life which is void of self. This feeling of 'self' or thinking about 'self,' leads to selfishness. All the selfishness in the world comes from the feeling of 'self,' of having a self, thinking about 'me.' And then there is selfishness, and it's this selfishness that bites its owner. Once there is selfishness it bites in very terrible, horrible ways. But when there is voidness there is no selfishness to bite its owner.

We'll look at some examples of selfishness. We'll consider them one by one to more clearly see the results of selfishness how it bites its owner. Love bites its owner, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. Anger bites its owner. Hatred bites its owner, the one who hates. Fear bites its owner, the one who is afraid. Excitement about circumstances bites its owner. Worry and anxiety about the future bites its owner. Longing after the past, missing the past, bites its owner. Envy bites its owner more than anything. Jealousy, possessiveness bites its owner. Sexual jealousy, jealousy about one's lover. These are enough examples, these ten will clearly show you how selfishness bites its owner. If there's no *attā*, no self, then these ten things won't exist. If there's no self, there's no selfishness, then there's no way for these ten things to happen. So then we ought to study dependent origination in order to understand these things correctly. And then we ought to practice *ānāpānasati* in order to thoroughly eliminate these things. May you all be successful in your study and practice of Dhamma at the center.

And we would like to thank you all for being good listeners. Thank You.

So may you all be successful in your study, in your practice of Dhamma, in receiving the truths of Dhamma practice and in using those truths beneficially, so that life achieves its highest potential. Thank you once again and that's the close of today's meeting.

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